on the jurisdiction of new zones in view of certain conflicting demands.

(b) The Standing Committee of Parliament on Railways had examined the issue of creation of zones in 1996 and had questioned the decision to go for six zones in one go. The Committee advocated a phased approach to the creation of new zones, that too on the basis of workload, efficiency and effective management and to develop model office. The Committee was replied indicating Government's policy of phased approach and building model new zonal offices.

(c) As already mentioned, the decision to create zones was taken in 1996—98. Creation of new zones had been progressing slowly for the past six years. It was recently decided to operationalise the new zones. The two zones, North Western Railway/ Jaipur and East Central Railway/Hajipur have already been operationalised w.e.f. 01.10.2002. The other five new zones are to be operatioanlised w.e.f. 01.4.2003. This has been done in view of substantial increase in the workload and the traffic on the Railways. Also issue of operationalising the zones has been figuring in the Parliament on a number of occasions, as also there have been demands from various public representatives for making the zones fully operational.

Conversion of rail lines in Rajasthan

446. SHRI GHULAM NABI AZAD:
SHRI SANTOSH BAGRODIA:

Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have received fresh proposals from the Rajasthan Government for conversion of rail lines, from meter gauge to broad gauge;

(b) if so, by when would these proposals be finalized; and

(c) funds required for the proposed conversion projects?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI BANDARU DATTATRAYA): (a) to (c) The details of fresh

proposals regarding gauge conversion received from Rajasthan Govt. are given as under:—

(i) Sadulpur-Churu-Bikaner and Ratangarh-Degana

A composite survey for gauge conversion of Rewari-Sadulpur and Hissar-Sadulpur-Ratangarh-Bikaner and Ratangarh-Degana was conducted in March, 1999. As per survey report the cost of conversion of these 605.49 kms. long lines was assessed as Rs. 542.65 crore. The work of gauge conversion of Rewari-Sadulpur (211 kms.) and Hissar-Sadulpur (70 Kms.) has now been sanctioned and preliminary arrangements are being made to take up this portion of work. In view of heavy throwforward and acute constraint of resources, it is not feasible to take up gauge conversion of Sadulpur-Churu-Bikaner and Ratangarh-Degana at present.

(ii) Phulera-Ringus-Rewari, Phulera-Jaipur (2nd BG line), Ringus-Sikar-Churu and Sikar-Loharu

A survey for gauge conversion of Phulera-Ringus-Rewari, Ajmer-Phulera-Jaipur (2nd BG line), Rignus-Sikar-Churu and Sikar-Loharu has been conducted. As per survey report, the cost of conversion of 673 km. long metre gauge sections into broad gauge has been assessed as Rs 645.82 crore. In view of heavy throwforward and acute constraint of resources, it has not been found feasible to consider gauge conversion of these sections at present.

(iii) Sriganganagar-Hanumangarh-Suratpura

Gauge conversion of Sriganganagar-Hanumangarh-Suratpura MG line would be 242 km. long and would cost not less than Rs. 400 crore. In view of heavy throwforward and acute constraint of resources, it has not been found feasible to consider gauge conversion of this MG line for the present.

(iv) Umra-Ahmedabad *via* Dungurpur and Himmatnagar

A survey for gauge conversion of Umra-Ahmedabad *via* Dungurpur and Himmatnagar is in progress. Further consideration of this project would be possible once the survey report becomes available.